

Message Text

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ACTION AF-08

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FM AMEMBASSY NAIROBI

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1684

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C O N F I D E N T I A L NAIROBI 8442

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, KE

SUBJECT: MISS MARGARET KENYATTA CHALLENGED

1. SUMMARY: THE UPCOMING ELECTION FOR MAYOR OF NAIROBI HAS UNEXPECTEDLY DEVELOPED INTO A POLITICAL STRUGGLE. MISS MARGARET KENYATTA MAY NOT WIN RE-ELECTION DESPITE THE FACT THAT SHE IS THE PRESIDENT'S DAUGHTER AND HAS KANU SUPPORT. END SUMMARY.

2. THE 44 CITY COUNCILLORS OF NAIROBI WILL MEET AUGUST 12 TO SELECT ONE OF THEIR MEMBERS AS THE CITY'S MAYOR FOR THE NEXT TWO YEARS. IN NORMAL CIRCUMSTANCES THE RE-ELECTION OF INCUMBENT, MARGARET KENYATTA, WOULD BE A FOREGONE CONCLUSION BUT SOME TIME AGO MISS KENYATTA, WHO HAS SERVED AS MAYOR SINCE 1970, ANNOUNCED SHE WOULD STEP ASIDE TO PERMIT SOMEONE ELSE TO HOLD THE JOB. THE RESULT WAS THAT INCUMBENT DEPUTY MAYOR AND CITY COUNCILLOR ANDREW NGUMBA DECLARED HIS CANDIDACY AND MOVED TO COLLECT SUPPORT. TWO WEEKS AGO A CLEAR MAJORITY OF 29 COUNCILLORS SIGNED A PETITION BACKING HIM.

3. MISS KENYATTA, HOWEVER, THEN REVERSED HER INITIAL POSITION AND ANNOUNCED FOR RE-ELECTION. THE HEAVY HANDED POWER OF THE KANU APPARATUS HAS BEEN ROLLED IN
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BEHIND HER AT THE LAST MINUTE. THE PARTY'S NAIROBI BRANCH

SECRETARY SAID PUBLICLY AUGUST 10 THAT MISS KENYATTA IS KANU'S ONLY CANDIDATE FOR MAYORAL OFFICE ADDICNG THAT THOSE WHO OPPOSE MISS KENYATTA OPPOSE KANU AND WILL SOON "FEEL THE WEIGHT OF THE PARTY." HE IMPLICITLY THREATENED THAT COUNCILLORS WHO DO NOT KNUCKLE UNDER WOULD LOSE THE RIGHT TO PARTICIPATE IN PARTY ELECTIONS (AND THEREBY LOSE THEIR JOBS).

4. NONETHELESS, THE RESULT OF THE AUGUST 12 VOTE CANNOT NOW BE PREDICTED WITH CERTAINTY. NGUMBA HAS NOT BOWED TO THE PRESSURE YET. HE MET WITH THE PRESS YESTERDAY FLANKED BY 21 OTHER COUNCILLORS WHO OSTENSIBLY CONTINUE TO SUPPORT HIM. MISS KENYATTA, ON THE OTHER HAND CLAIMS TO HAVE 25 COMMITTED VOTES.

5. COMMENT: THIS IS NOT THE FIRST TIME THE KANU APPARATUS HAS BEEN UTILIZED TO INTIMIDATE AND COERCE OFFICE HOLDERS. THIS TIME, HOWEVER, IT MAY NOT WORK. THERE IS LITTLE OR NOTHING OF SUBSTANCE AT ISSUE IN THE ELECTION ITSELF. WHAT IS INVOLVED IS A PERSONALITY CONTEST WHICH THE PRESIDENT'S DAUGHTER MAY LOSE DESPITE THE BEST EFFORTS OF THE KANU APPARATUS. AS SUCH IT HAS BECOME TO SOME EXTENT A TEST OF THE ROYAL FAMILY'S AND THE PARTY'S STRENGTH.

6. AFTER FOREGOING WAS DRAFTED IT WAS ANNOUNCED IN NAIROBI (LATE AUGUST 10) THAT MAYORAL ELECTION HAD BEEN POSTPONED INDEFINITELY. THIS STRONGLY SUGGESTS MISS KENYATTA HAD BEEN UNABLE TO MUSTER SUFFICIENT SUPPORT TO WIN.
MARSHALL

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